

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands

Witness Statement

**TESTIMONY OF BRAD QUAYLE
KSL RECREATION CORPORATION
BEFORE THE NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
MARCH 16, 2000**

Introduction

Chairman Hansen, Ranking Member Romero-Barcelo, thank you for the invitation to testify today on H.R. 3676, the "Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Act of 2000." My name is Brad Quayle and I am testifying as a representative of a major landowner, developer and employer who is deeply concerned about the National Monument designation - KSL Recreation Corporation. I have submitted a longer written statement that I will now summarize in the interests of time.

KSL owns and operates resort properties in California, Hawaii, Michigan, Georgia and Florida, including, PGA WEST, La Quinta Resort & Club, Grand Wailea Resort, and Doral Golf Resort and Spa. KSL employs approximately 6000 people nationwide and maintains its headquarters in La Quinta, California, one of several cities in the Coachella Valley - the populous area, which is directly adjacent to the proposed Monument. In fact, the City of La Quinta was the fastest growing city in California last year. KSL also owns approximately 2000 acres of land in La Quinta - a significant portion of which represents the future growth of the City of La Quinta.

I am pleased to be here to testify on H.R. 3676, which was introduced by Representative Bono on February 16th. I want to commend Representative Bono for crafting a piece of legislation that recognizes the unique challenges posed in designating a national monument in a densely populated area. I also want to thank her for conducting an open and inclusive process in developing her proposal with the local community's participation and input. The decisions that are made regarding this proposed Monument will have a significant permanent impact on the citizens who live and work in the Coachella Valley.

Today I want to briefly discuss:

- The unique challenge posed in creating a monument in close proximity to a densely populated, highly developed area;
- KSL's desire to protect the scenic mountains of the proposed Monument;
- The potential unintended impact of the Monument designation on private lands and consequent impact on jobs and economic growth; and
- Most importantly, I wish to praise the careful balance achieved by Representative Bono in H.R. 3676

in reconciling all of these interests and protecting future economic growth, jobs and the environment.

A Unique Challenge

It is important first to recognize the unique geographic status of this proposed Monument. We are not familiar with another case where a national park unit of this size has been proposed for designation so close to a densely populated area. The proposed Monument would encompass 280,000 acres directly bordering the Coachella Valley, which is home to over 329,000 people. Because of these unique circumstances, it is vital that the legislation designating the Monument be unique as well - striking a balance between protecting both the Monument's values and the long-standing development of the cities in the Coachella Valley.

Protecting the Environment

The Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, which tower 11,000 feet above the Coachella Valley, form a breathtaking and unique landscape. When the sun rises and strikes the face of the mountains it is truly a sight to behold. As Secretary Babbitt put it when he visited here last year, it is easy to be captured by the "poetry" of these mountains.

Of course, the mountains are a major part of the appeal of the Coachella Valley and are vital to the area's continued well-being. In fact, the mountains provide a unique backdrop to PGA WEST and La Quinta Resort & Club, giving KSL a direct interest in protecting their scenic beauty for future generations. Thus, we support the legislative process that is considering designation to provide tools to protect the federal lands *within* the Monument's borders.

Protecting Jobs and Economic Growth

However, as we work to protect these mountains, we must do so in a way that does not endanger the livelihood of the citizens who live and work in the Coachella Valley. It would be an unfair and unnecessary trade-off to protect the Monument at the cost of sacrificing the continued economic well-being and growth of existing communities.

No Additional Restrictions on Private Lands / No Buffer Zones

We fear that designation could be used as a tool to restrict activities and land uses on private lands outside the Monument that are perceived as adversely impacting the Monument itself. De facto buffer zones outside National Park and monument boundaries have been created in the past as local governments have been pressured to restrict private land development by special interest groups and federal agencies. For instance, growth opponents may suggest that light and noise emanating from activities on private lands outside the Monument somehow impact the Monument and use these alleged impacts as an excuse to "bootstrap" restrictions on private land development by pressuring state and local governments and agencies during the approval process. Such potential problems could be exacerbated by the close proximity of this Monument to the population center of the Valley. With significant private landholdings adjoining the proposed borders, scores of businesses like KSL could be impacted by regulations or Federal agency pressure creeping off the Monument.

It is important to remember that nine rapidly-growing cities already exist in the Coachella Valley. Congress must ensure that the National Monument respects what already exists and Congress should tailor its legislation so as not to harm the future of the existing communities. This Monument must not permit the

erection of explicit or implied buffer zones or any additional restrictions or safeguards on development and land uses occurring on private, non-federal lands. Further, federal agencies and special interest groups should be discouraged from pressuring local governments to restrict developments outside the Monument's borders. We strongly support Section 3(e) and Section 2(a)(5) of the legislation because they are consistent with this intent.

Consensus Map

Due to the close proximity of urbanized areas to the Monument, the map of its proposed boundaries is critical. In certain iterations these proposed borders have included large areas of private property. Due to uncertainty as to the accuracy and detail of existing maps, Representative Bono facilitated discussions and negotiations between the BLM, local communities, and private landowners to produce a consensus boundary map. It is important that this legislation expressly incorporate this consensus boundary map. Sections 2(c) and 2(d) are intended expressly to accomplish this goal.

Interim Management Plan

The bill anticipates that it will take three years to produce a management plan for the Monument that relies upon community input. Based on past experience, we fear that federal agencies and special interest groups might pressure local governments with jurisdiction over land use decisions to impose a freeze or moratorium on existing uses and land development within and outside the Monument boundaries pending the completion of the management plan. This would be devastating to the Coachella Valley as its residents continue to work to build a vibrant local economy, which is largely dependent upon recreation. More specifically, KSL looks forward to several new projects which would create thousands of jobs, but any freeze or moratorium affecting these projects would jeopardize this expansion of the job base. Section 4(c) provides guidance and assurance that activities on and uses of land within the Monument be allowed to continue during the development of the management plan. We hope that Congress will also make it clear in Section 4(c) that it does not wish for federal agencies to create or advocate any sort of moratorium that would "freeze" recreational uses within the Monument and/or private land use and development outside the Monument during the three-year interim period.

Finding a Balance

In crafting this legislation, KSL believes that we can all work together to strike a balance between the environment and economic growth. That is why we now support Representative Bono's bill. Representative Bono's bill ensures that the protection of the land within the Monument will not come at the cost of jobs and economic growth outside of the Monument. While some of these provisions may be perceived as being unique, these provisions actually respond simply to the uniqueness of the designation. We urge all parties to work together throughout the legislative process to see that these goals become a reality in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains

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